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QUEEN MARY'S CHILL 2017

SCOTT FEINBLATT

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ORANGE FEATHERS »

BOB AUL

OCWEEKLY.

EDITORIAL
EDITOR Nick Schou
ASSOCIATE EDITOR Patrice Marsters
SENIOR EDITOR, NEWS & INVESTIGATIONS R. Scott Moxley
STAFF WRITERS Mary Carreon, Matt Coker, Gabriel San Román
MUSIC EDITOR Nate Jackson
WEB/CULTURE EDITOR Taylor Hanley
CALENDAR EDITOR Aimee Murillo
FOOD EDITOR Cynthia Rebolledo
EDITORIAL ASSISTANT/ PROOFREADER Lisa Black
CONTRIBUTING WRITERS Dave Barton, Joel Beers, Sarah Bennett, Lilletashan Bose, Josh Chesler, Heidi Darby, Alex Distefano, Erin DeWitt, Edwin Goei, Candace Hansen, Daniel Kohn, Dave Lieberman, Adam Lovinus, Todd Mathews, Katrina Nattress, Nick Nuk am, Anna Marie Panoringan, Andrew Teskevich, Frank John Tristan, Brittany Woolsey, Chris Ziegler

EDITORIAL ART
CONTRIBUTING ARTISTS AlGar Leslie Agan, Bob Aul, Jared Beggess, Mark Dancey, Rob Dobi, Jeff Drew, Scott Feinblatt, Greg Houston, Cameron K. Lewis, Bill Mayer, Luke McGarry, Kevin McVeigh, Thomas Pitilli, Joe Reese, Julie Salgado
PHOTOGRAPHERS Wednesday Aja, Ed Carrasco, Brian Ernen, Scott Feinblatt, Brian Feinzimer, John Gilhooley, Eric Reed, Nick Iverson, Alex Johnson, Matt Kollar, Isaac Larios, Danny Liao, Shane Lopes, Fabian Ortiz, Rickett & Senea Josué Rivas, Eran Syan, Sugarwolf, Matt Ulfelder, Miguel Vasconcellos, Christopher Victorio, William Vo, Kevin Warn, Micah Wright

PRODUCTION
ART DIRECTOR Richie Beckman
PRODUCTION MANAGER Casey Long
LAYOUT DESIGNER/PRODUCTION ARTIST Mercedes Del Real

SALES
ADVERTISING DIRECTOR Scott Mabry
SALES DIRECTOR Ryan Whipple
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SENIOR ACCOUNT EXECUTIVES Danny Nudgins, Katie Lynch
ACCOUNT EXECUTIVES Sam Kerwin, Daniel Voet, Jason Winder

MARKETING
MARKETING DIRECTOR Jennifer Wales
MARKETING MANAGER/EAT+DRINK DIRECTOR Janelle Arballo
SALES/MARKETING COORDINATOR Nicole Tawney

ADMINISTRATION
PRESIDENT & CEO Duncan McIntosh
VICE PRESIDENT & GENERAL MANAGER Jeff Fleming
AR COORDINATOR Daniela Ortigoza

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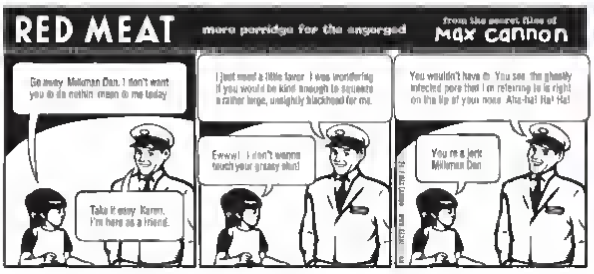
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Eeeww! I don't wanna touch your greasy skin!
You wouldn't have to. You see, the ghastly infected pore that I'm referring to is right on the tip of your nose. Aha-ha! Ha! Ha!
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Now You OCSD It, Now You Don't

Did sheriff's deputies destroy exculpatory infrared helicopter video?

Southern California police pursuits make live dramas for TV broadcasts starring unpaid criminal suspects racing down neighborhood streets, running red lights, ignoring stop signs and weaving through crowded highway traffic in Indianapolis 500 fashion. Late on a November 2015 evening, Jimmy Hoang Truong became the featured performer of such a show as the chased driver of a gray Mercedes S500, which performed the obligatory basics.

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»R. SCOTT MOXLEY

near-100-mph speeds on the highway and plenty of U-turns, dragging a parade of sirens and flashing lights. The 28-year-old Truong, who'd declined to stop for an expired-vehicle-registration violation, even executed the goldmine of moves for the yowling whirly-bird narrators: He drove on the wrong side of the road.

After a 90-minute pursuit, multiple emotional cellphone chats with a police negotiator and a two-plus-hour standoff secured by two armored combat trucks, Bear and Peacekeeper, Truong surrendered. Oddly, the cops hadn't fired a single shot, though three Santa Ana Police Department (SAPD) officers claimed he'd tried to kill each of them with semi-automatic .45-caliber gunfire at various points during the incident. A simple registration failure became 17 felony and enhancement charges.

But Mark A. Hover, Truong's Simi Valley-based attorney, insists the three attempted-murder counts are based on falsified police stories. According to Hover, his client, who was living in his car near Little Saigon and struggling with a methamphetamine problem, told the negotiator to keep officers from closing in. But he also said Truong repeatedly made clear the only person he wanted to hurt was himself.

Over the objections this month of prosecutor Brock Zimmon, Hover tried to use science to unravel the government's case. He summoned Lester J. Kozlowski, an expert in infrared imaging interpretation, to court for a pretrial hearing. Kozlowski explained that hot objects—the hoods and tires on vehicles, bodies of pedestrians and car passengers, and pavement that had been beneath idling cars and trucks—are easily recognized as bright white in infrared recordings.

The airborne law-enforcement crew inside an Orange County Sheriff's Department (OCSD) helicopter had used its FLIR thermal-imaging camera system to shoot footage of Truong's chase, and Hover wanted Kozlowski to testify about his bombshell observations of a segment when an officer barked, "Shot fired again." The defense attorney asked the expert if he expected to see evidence of the alleged shot on the infrared video.

"No question," replied Kozlowski, but the expert said there was none—no visible muzzle flash or hot bullet projectile.

Kozlowski also noted the OCSD footage proved all of the windows in Truong's Mercedes were closed at the time of the cop's assertion, you'd naturally assume there'd be signs of shattered glass if a bullet had slammed into a window. "There's no broken glass," Kozlowski advised note-taking Superior Court Judge Thomas M. Goethals.

Hover is seeking sanctions against the government—including dismissal of the indictment—not just because of the mystery missing bullet, but also because he says the cops doctored and destroyed key records.

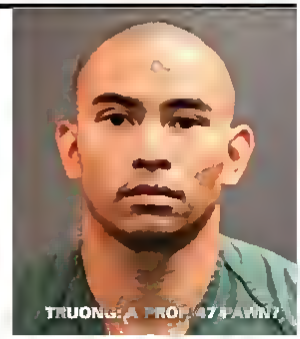
Indeed, police officials acknowledge they edited audio of Truong's calls to 911—ones in which he stated he had suicidal thoughts—without informing the defense of the alterations. An entire channel of related police communications was not preserved, and OCSD turned over infrared footage recorded with sequentially ending file numbers of 000, 001, 002, 003 and 005.

Where is 004?

Joseph Kantar, a member of the helicopter crew, testified he's baffled by the missing file and blamed a possible unknown temporary equipment malfunction, a suggestion Hover found preposterous.

We'll likely never see all of the helicopter video shot during the chase. After Hover saw discrepancies—such as not a single police picture exists of his client sticking his left arm out of the driver's-side window to fire bullets at the cops, as the officers described—and demanded access to potentially missing records, OCSD announced that much of the footage had been permanently lost. The cause? Yet another equipment malfunction.

Arguing all the missing evidence could have just as easily strengthened the prosecution's case, Zimmon said it would be wrong to view developments as nefarious. "There is absolutely no basis [to believe this was] some sort of fictitious crash," he said. "If [the helicopter crew and SAPD officers] did these acts [falsifying reports and destroying evidence], they would be fired. Why would they do it?"



Hover thinks he knows the answer: lousy ethics and warped politics. Hours after Truong's arrest, District Attorney Tony Rackauckas, DA media flack Susan Kang Schroeder and then-SAPD chief Carlos Rojas made him the poster face for their campaign to demonize Proposition 47, which reduced certain nonviolent felonies, particularly ones involving illegal drug use, to misdemeanors and freed such offenders from custody.

Guilty of a series of drug possession-related crimes, Truong had been a beneficiary of Prop. 47. According to Hover, the cops concocted the attempted-murder scenarios to fit their political narrative. "From the moment Jimmy Truong was arrested, the prosecution has gone to work to make sure he goes to prison for life," he said. "Inasmuch as the office of the district attorney and Orange County law-enforcement agencies have publicized the case in their anti-Prop. 47 campaigns, they will and have gone to whatever lengths necessary to prevent him from defending the allegations against him and from having a fair trial."

Goethals, a former homicide prosecutor who has seen a steady stream of brazen OCSD liars testify in his courtroom in recent years, nonetheless expressed doubt about the ability of proving the existence of a plot.

The judge told Hover not to be entirely disappointed in the likely Dec. 20 rejection of his motion to dismiss the attempted-murder charges before trial. "An officer said a shot was fired," Goethals said. "Your expert watched in conjunction with audio and saw no evidence a shot was fired. . . . [At a future jury trial,] you can say, 'They lied about it on the one [video] we have, and so it's logical they lied about the other ones, too.'"

RSCOTTMOXLEY@OCWEEKLY.COM

POLITICAL FOOTBALL
» STEVE LOWERY

Cleveland Browns (0-14) vs. Chicago Bears (4-10)

Cleveland update: Along with Syria and wherever Melania Trump goes to reflect honestly about her life choices, Cleveland is one of the saddest spots on Earth. It's a sadness so profound that it can take bona-fide awesome things and turn them into awfulness—you know, like what Facebook did to the internet. Cleveland's once-great-and-proud NFL franchise won just one game last season, which sounds lame except it's way better than this season's team, which has won fewer (we'll leave you to complete the math on that). The Mistake By the Lake's melancholy is so dense it's one tourist draw is the execrable Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, a brick-and-mortar affront to rock's essential outsider ethos. Having a Rock and Roll Hall of Fame—now with more Bon Jovi!—makes about as much sense as having a Build-a-Bear Biker Bar, which, now that I see those words arranged together, sounds frigging awesome! Dibs!

Chicago update: A truly great city plagued by gun violence that has been likened to the Tutsis' and Hutus' genocide by local authorities, who have suggested U.N. Peacekeepers be brought in to help because they're getting nothing from leaders such as Donald Trump, who campaigned he would make cities such as Chicago safe again. Recently, Trump attacked the tragedy head-on while speaking before the FBI Academy, incisively remarking, "What the hell is going on in Chicago? What the hell is happening there?" Trump, of course, has done all he could to quell the situation, whether it be scapegoating immigrants for being largely responsible (Nope!) or ensuring that Chicago's murderers will always have guns and ammo (Lots!).

Consensus: Rock & roll is steeped in the spirit of the rebel, so having an institution dedicated to cloying acceptance reminds me of what the great Hank Hill had to say about Christian rock: "You're not making Christianity any better; you're just making rock & roll worse." C'mon, Cleveland, you're better than this. Well, maybe not. Go Bears!

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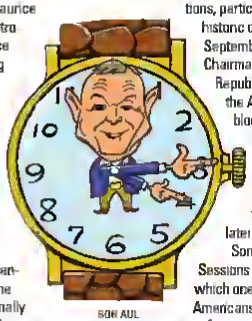
Smoke Sessions

» MATT COKER

As this story went to press, survival was unclear for legislation co-sponsored by Representative Dana Rohrabacher (R-Other End of Putin's Peace Pipe) that prevents Attorney General Jeff "Buzzkill" Sessions from targeting cannabusinesses in states where medical marijuana is legal.

In 2001, Representative Maurice Hinchey (D-New York) first introduced a bill to stop the Justice Department from prosecuting patients and dispensaries where medical marijuana is legal. Two years later, a co-sponsor came onboard with the Rohrabacher-Hinchey Act, although the New Yorker never saw it pass before his 2013 retirement from Congress. (He passed away in November.)



BOB AUL

With new sponsor Representative Sam Farr (D-Carmel), the Rohrabacher-Farr Act was finally approved as a budget amendment in 2014 with 170 Democrats and 149 Republicans in favor. But because it's an amendment, Congress must re-authorize it annually, and so far, it has survived every vote. The legislation currently protects the 29 states, plus the District of Columbia, that have legalized medical marijuana.

Farr retired from Congress in January, and trouble for what is now known as Rohrabacher-Blumenauer (after co-sponsoring Oregon Democratic Representative Earl Blumenauer) came with Sessions' confirmation as AG in February. Having as a senator supported the death penalty for all drug traffickers, including pot dealers, the Southern pixie has repeatedly said cannabis is only slightly less dangerous than heroin.

Writing about Rohrabacher-Blumenauer in a May letter to lawmakers, Sessions called it "unwise for Congress to restrict the discretion of the department to fund particular prosecutions, particularly in the midst of an historic drug epidemic." Then in September, House Rules Committee Chairman Pete Sessions, a Texas Republican who is not related to the AG but is also anti-cannabis, blocked a vote on Rohrabacher-Blumenauer. That left it intact only through a Dec. 8 deadline for Congress to pass a new spending bill for the next year, which was later pushed back to Dec. 22.

Some deem it foolish for Jeff Sessions to take on medical marijuana, which one poll found 94 percent of Americans supporting. Heck, legalization of *recreational* cannabis was favored by nearly two-thirds in an October Gallup poll, the highest support on record in almost five decades.

Rohrabacher told *Newsweek* that same month that prosecuting something so widely supported is inefficient use of Department of Justice resources, adding, "That's the sign of someone who is adamant beyond reason to this issue."

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HeyYou!

» ANONYMOUS

(S)Hitler

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HEY, YOU! Send anonymous thanks, confessions or accusations—changing or deleting the names of the guilty and innocent—to "Hey, You!" c/o *OC Weekly*, 18475 Bandilier Circle, Fountain Valley, CA 92708, or email us at letters@ocweekly.com.

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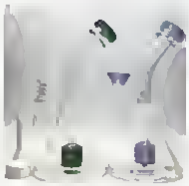

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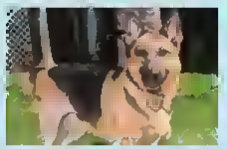

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God Save the QUEEN

(AND LONG BEACH MAY SHE REIGN)

By Taylor Hamby

PHOTOS BY SPIKE MARBLE

THE PAST

In 1888, the newly minted seaside town of Long Beach, California, lost its biggest and ostensibly only tourist attraction to a tragic fire. The drolly named Long Beach Hotel was a behemoth of Victorian architecture. Built on a bluff that is now the site of the recently decommissioned Long Beach City Hall and library, the five-story structure included a dining hall with a massive bay window so guests could admire the breakwater-free Pacific Ocean during their stay. On Nov. 8, 1888, flames engulfed the building.

It was a victimless blaze, save for the pride of the brand-new city. Although there was no way to know it at the time, the young city's best days were still to come. Long Beach has a long and proud history of boosterism, some projects more successful than others. Over the past century, the city has hosted a (since-closed) U.S. Navy base, an international port, the annual Grand Prix Formula One and stock-car races, the legendary (and long-gone) Pike amusement park, and, of course, Alex's Bar.

Long Beach's greatest achievement in international self-marketing took place in 1967, when a grand British ocean liner trailed by thousands of sailing ships and motorized watercraft entered the bay. The large ship would eventually become the most iconic landmark in Long Beach, as well as perhaps the most interesting hotel destination in Southern California. The *RMS Queen Mary* had found its new, hopefully final home.

The grand dame of ocean liners' Long Beach Jubilee began on Dec. 9. But to properly tell the story, one must begin at the end of her time at sea. Captain John Treasure Jones had been at the helm of the *Queen Mary* for only three of her 31 years at sea when Cunard, the British ship-building dynasty, sold it to Long Beach for $3.45 million in 1967.

Jones had spent 47 years of his life at sea. In 1965, he had the dubious distinction of steering another of Cunard's grand ocean liners, the *RMS Mauretania*, to her end, a Scottish scrapyard. It was a memory that would forever haunt him. And here he was, just two short years later, once again at the helm on the final voyage of a grand British vessel. That was enough "final voyages" for one career; Jones would retire once the *Queen Mary* reached her final mooring halfway across the world. The good captain was going down with his ship.

Accounts of the *Queen*'s final voyage in the autumn of 1967 were peppered with melancholia, but Jones kept the optimism afloat. He was pleased the "First Queen of the Atlantic" would escape the scrapyard fate that befell so many vessels from the Golden Age of ocean liner travel. She would go on to live a new life as a hotel, convention center and maritime museum in sunny Southern California.

A *Los Angeles Times* article published the day after the *Queen Mary* left Southampton for the final time dismissed her as "Long Beach's answer to Disneyland." The city's main tourist attraction, the Pike, a once-bustling seaside fun zone that had become notoriously seedy over the years, struggled to compete with the novel allure of Disneyland when it opened in Anaheim in 1955 and as Knott's Berry Farm grew as an amusement park in neighboring Buena Park.

Luxury ocean travel also fell victim to changing tides of tourism. Jet travel was de rigueur for travelers of the day, it was faster, more affordable, new and exciting. The liners of old, once among the fastest manmade forces found on Earth, struggled to keep up with the unforgiving movement of time.

As tourism declined in Long Beach, the city's oil economy boomed. The oil-rich seaport was in a prime spot to triumph in a bidding war when the *Queen Mary* and her sister ship, the *RMS Queen Elizabeth*, hit the auction block in 1967. The city outbid contenders including New York and Philadelphia.

» CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN

» FROM PAGE 11

To build a maritime museum in Long Beach, $8 million in Tideland oil funds had been put aside. The *Queen Mary*, renovated and retrofitted, would cost less than that, according to early projections. "Not since Manhattan went for a bag of beads has anyone turned this good a deal," jested one *LA Times* article.

The news was announced with much fanfare locally and with blanket news coverage in both her birthplace and final destination. Joseph Lanesch, a Long Beach environmental planner who helped orchestrate the ship's new home, said the *Queen Mary* and the surrounding attractions "will be a significant decision in making Long Beach the 'Riviera of the West.'" He added, "It would be inappropriate if she did not have a setting fit for a queen."

No time was wasted in sending her off to her new home. Despite protests from Cunard, the city insisted on selling tickets to her grand last hurrah, which would help to recoup the $600,000 cost of sending her from Southampton, England, to California. The *Queen Mary* was a fine vessel to take for day trips across the Pond, but a 39-day trip halfway around the world? Cunard was wary of how the old girl would fare. But her new owners persisted.

The final voyage, which launched from Southampton on Halloween 1967, was sold out. The cruise was packed with mostly wealthy retirees from Southern California who paid between $1,200 and $9,000 to be aboard for her 1,001st trip. "The average age must be at least 70," sighed one of the disappointed young swingers aboard," mused one *LA Times* reporter. "There can't have been a white-rinsed head left in California."

The voyage sought to re-create the opulence of her days at sea during the 1930s and 1940s, the *Queen Mary* took a break during World War II to serve as transatlantic transportation for the Allies, then resumed in the 1950s. A true luxury liner, she transported royalty, heads of state, celebrities and socialites from Winston Churchill to Clark Gable to Liberace.

In her heyday, passengers from first class to cabin were treated to state-of-the-art Deco-era excess and fine British hospitality. They could nosh in the Verandah Grill or first-class dining room, enjoying meals on par with any three-Michelin-starred French restaurant. The gorgeous Royal Salon showed the latest films. And, of course, there was the dancing set to live bands, the soirees would last long into the night.

More than a decade removed from the ship's golden days, the final voyage was not all glitz and glamour. Air conditioning was still in its infancy when the ship was built in the 1930s, so the *Queen Mary* had none. Two trips past the equator brutalized passengers and crew with relentless, grueling heat. One salad chef—56-year-old Lock Horsborough, fondly nicknamed "Lobster" for his alcoholic blush—succumbed to the heat and died near Rio. He was buried at sea.

Too big to fit in the Panama Canal, the ship made history by being the largest vessel to round Cape Horn. On the way south, a woman was ejected from the ship in Rio for allegedly soliciting prostitution, sending tongues wagging about the decline of the clientele.

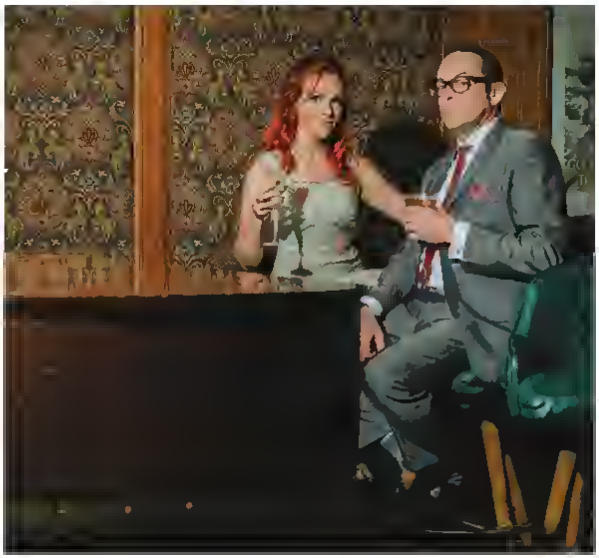
"[The *Queen Mary*] has deteriorated badly," Charles Horner told the *LA Times*. He had served as a lounge steward during the ship's maiden voyage in 1936. "When she first ran the Atlantic, she was a class ship. I mean really tops. The passengers were rich, and the stewards were experienced men. ... Today, the young men we've got in the crew—it's not like in the old days. Just riff-raff, some of them."

Whether riff-raff or retiree (or both), the passengers were determined to have fun. The drinks flowed freely, and guests made sure to pick up a little extra at each stop to save a buck or two onboard. "They come up the gangplank like ants, carrying 50 times their own weight, lugging arms full of booze and souvenirs," reported the *Times*. "You'd imagine from the ecstasy shining in their eyes that they'd decided they could recoup their travel expenses in liquor savings."

Seventeen days into the trip, the *Times* noted, there was a large costume party on the Promenade Deck, with "elderly ladies showing too much leg and bosom" and "more Arabs, bed sheets being readily available, than you could shake an eyepatch at."

As the ship neared the end of its 14,559-mile journey, any unpleasantries those onboard experienced began to wash away. On Dec. 8, the penultimate day of the journey, a Douglas DC-9 flew over and dropped thousands of carnations on her decks, just as another jet had done on her maiden voyage. That evening, the Main Lounge was decorated with tinsel and glitter, and passengers, crew and captain made sure to give the old girl one final night to remember. Reports say revelers partied well into the next morning.

On Dec. 9, the *Queen Mary* sailed into San Diego. An armada of sea vessels big and small began to join her trip north. The Coast Guard was called to help keep order.



Jones steered her within 2 miles of the coast of Newport Beach so Southern Californians could get a good look.

As she approached Long Beach, some 5,000 vessels in tow, passengers started throwing "souvenirs" into the harbor—deck chairs, silverware, anything that wasn't bolted down. The ship arrived to Pier E just before noon. At 12:16 p.m., Jones entered the engine room and sent a bittersweet telegram marking the successful voyage. The message contained just three words: "Finished with Engines."

THE PRESENT

After four years of overhaul, the *Queen Mary* partially opened to the public in May 1971. In December of that year, Jacques Cousteau's "Museum of the Sea" opened onboard. The diving icon helped to design the exhibit, but it opened with just a quarter of the proposed attractions. Low ticket sales shuttered the museum a decade later. Brian Luallen, the *Queen Mary*'s current director of events and entertainment, says that the shift to events-based tourism was a natural choice.

"There's always been a grand tradition of entertainment here on the ship," he explains. "It truly was a spectacular party back in the day. We kind of evoke those qualities today with diverse programming that would have been comparable with what you would have experienced as a first-class passenger sailing on the ship in her golden years."

The historic ship has served as a mecca for history-heads and vintage-lovers who are hungry for a direct portal back to the '30s and '40s. The Art Deco Society of Los Angeles hosted the Art Deco Festival there for many years. The event lives on under new management, attracting period-perfect re-enactors and enthusiasts for a long weekend of informative lectures, era-appropriate libations and a defacto Deco fashion show that can't be beat.

The grounds around the *Queen Mary* have also played host to many large-scale music festivals. Most notably was Ink-N-Iron, a legendary festival that brought iconic tattoo artists from all over the world alongside top-tier punk and garage acts such as Iggy & the Stooges, the Sonics, the Buzzcocks, and the Damned. (The event, which started in 2002, relocated to Nashville in 2015, then went bankrupt.)

Other large-scale music festivals such as Summertime In the LBC in August appealed to a city rich in hip-hop history. Genre giants YG and Wu-Tang brought with them droves of young crowds. On Dec. 5, big-time concert promoter Goldenvoice (of Coachella fame) announced a two-year contract with Urban Commons, the leaseholder of the *Queen Mary*. The joint venture aims to bring three to four large festivals per year to the *Queen Mary* Waterfront Events Park, plus several smaller-scale events onboard the ship.

Signature events such as the annual ScotsFestival, Dark Harbor halloween haunt, and winter wonderland Chill draw diverse crowds each year. Luallen says the *Queen Mary* is just warming up her engines as a destination for can't-miss music festivals and more. Her role as a venue, more than an icon or hotel, might just be what keeps her afloat.

The tionon that the *Queen Mary*'s glory days are behind her has been around long before anyone ever dreamed of her coming to Long Beach. Thirty-one years of wear and tear from both harsh sea air and heavy foot traffic had taken their toll. As the ocean liner's Atlantic crossing ticket sales declined, so did her maintenance. A large feature story in the *LA Times*' long-gone Sunday

» CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

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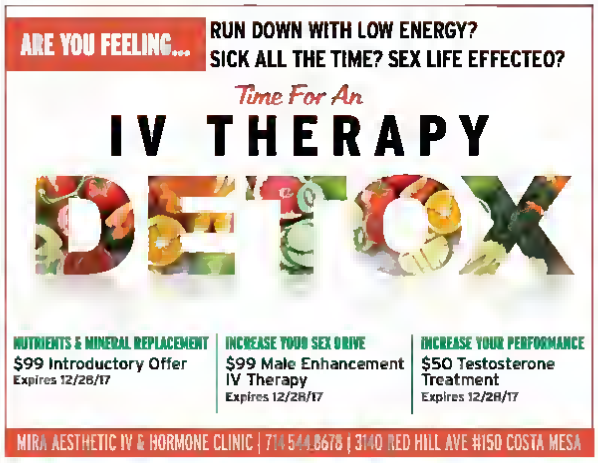
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GOD SAVE THE QUEEN

» FROM PAGE 12

magazine *West*, published the day after the *Queen Mary*'s arrival in Long Beach, likened the ship to an aging Gloria Swanson as washed-up film star Norma Desmond in *Sunset Boulevard*. Still clutching to her old diamonds and dreaming of more glamorous days gone by, eagerly awaiting the comeback that would ultimately never come.

"It's hard to evaluate the *Queen* today," the 1967 article stated. "According to the experts hired by Long Beach to check her out, she's in fine operating order. But topside, it's not always so easy to spot her former dazzle. Up close, crow's feet and wrinkles show. It looks gauche, overblown; she's high style gone seedy."

The undeniable beauty and romance of the vessel has allured a revolving door of would-be knights in shining armour gallantly coming to the aid of the distressed *Queen* over the years. The nostalgia and reverence she holds is what saved her from the scrapyard fate that befell most other grand liners of her time in the jet age.

One such cavalier was Jack Wrather, a Texas oil boy gone Hollywood producer, best known for his work on the *Lone Ranger* TV show and owner of several lucrative properties across Southern California including the Disneyland Hotel and Balboa Bay Club. Wrather was said to have fallen in love with the ship while he and his second wife, Bonita Granville, sailed upon her across the Atlantic several times.

In 1980, *Queen Mary* operations went into upheaval as Hyatt Hotels pulled out of the hotel-operating duties. Wrather Corporation came in the same year and signed a 66-year lease to manage the *Queen Mary* and surrounding lands. In 1983, Wrather brought pilot Howard Hughes' Hughes H-4 Hercules, more commonly known as the *Spruce Goose*, to the *Queen Mary* grounds. The flying boat, housed in the now-iconic white geodesic dome, and the ship became sister attractions.

Wrather played a similar benefactor role in the building of the Disneyland Hotel in the early to mid-1950s. Walt Disney was overextended financially from building the unprecedented Anaheim theme park. The area surrounding what would become Disneyland was then mostly fruit groves and dirt lots and devoid of the upscale hotels that now make up the Anaheim Resort. Disney turned to buddy Wrather to finance and build a nearby hotel. Wrather initially declined to fund such a pipe dream, but a counteroffer from Uncle Walt giving Wrather a 99-year lease on the property and rights to use the Disney name on any subsequent hotels Wrather built in Southern California sweetened the pot enough for the two to reach an agreement.

Disney tried for years to buy the hotel once they could afford it, but Wrather refused. It wasn't until some three decades later, after Wrather died and his corporation fell on financial hardship, that Disney was able to obtain the Disneyland Hotel in a $152 million buyout in 1988. The caveat? Disney had to take on Wrather's other properties, including the management of the *Queen Mary* and *Spruce Goose*.

The Mouse tried to make a go of the *Queen Mary* and its waterfront properties. The company had big plans for Port Disney, which was set to include the DisneySea nautical theme park, several new hotels, and a shopping and entertainment district. Eventually, the city of Anaheim was able to entice Disney's development dollars better than the city of Long Beach, and plans for Disneyland-By-the-Sea were scrapped in 1991. Disney pulled anchor in Long Beach to begin work on a "Westcott" development in Anaheim, which would eventually evolve into Downtown Disney, the Grand Californian Hotel and, of course, California Adventure. DisneySea would be built in 2001 in Tokyo, with its own grand ocean liner re-creation, the *S.S. Columbia*, which features three familiar funnels with a knowingly close to Cunard red paint job.

Disney pulled out of port in 1992, forcibly closing the Hotel *Queen Mary* and three days later sending the *Spruce Goose* off to its new and current home in Oregon. By New Year's Eve, the *Queen Mary* had closed to the public completely. Joseph F. Prevratil, president and CEO of RMS Foundation Inc., took over operations the following year, and the *Queen Mary* reopened incrementally.

A 2004 *OC Weekly* feature story by Dave Wielenga, titled "Queen Scary," included an interview with Prevratil, who had been at the helm for 10 straight years at that point (he had previously run the ship from 1982 to 1988 with the Wrather Corp.). The article had a familiar tone and posed the question that seems to have been asked since the ship arrived in California 50 years ago: What is to be done with this *Queen Mary*?

"City Hall is terribly frightened of the *Queen Mary*," RMS Foundation Inc. financier Dr. Robert Gumbiner told Wielenga. "Whatever mayor, city council or city manager is in office at the time, they are frightened that the *Queen Mary* will somehow turn into a rotting hulk on their watch. As long as they can avoid that, they will do anything." (Long Beach Mayor Robert Garcia and the city's media-relations team did not respond to the *Weekly*'s recent requests for interviews.)

More than a decade later, the ship's existential dilemma now has an exclamation point. A marine survey conducted in 2015

GARELARDIMARES

by naval architects and vessel experts at the behest of city officials and first reported in the *Long Beach Press-Telegram* in March of this year came to a damning conclusion: Years of neglect had severely sabotaged the vessel's structural integrity, and if drastic restoration action was not taken immediately, the building would flood, collapse—or both.

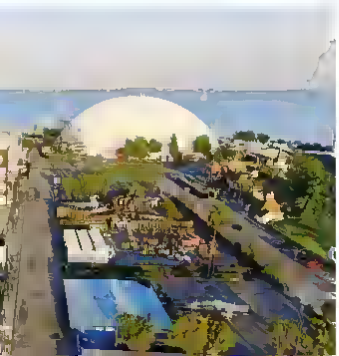
As the story made international headlines, the report rocked the *Queen Mary*'s reputation and brought a lot of heat to the city, new leaseholder Urban Commons and Evolution Hospitality, the San Clemente-based luxury hotel conglomerate that runs the hotel element of the ship. (Evolution Hospitality did not respond to our interview request for this story.)

Some of the most heated cries of outrage came from Scotland, where she was built. "Conservationists say the way the ship has been treated is 'criminal' and that if the legacy of 'irresponsible' custodianship is any guide, her demise is 'inevitable,'" reported *The Scotsman*. "Politicians in Scotland have led calls for an international fundraising campaign to restore the former Cunard liner and urged Prime Minister Theresa May to put pressure on the U.S. government to step in."

The city's economic- and property-development director, John Keisler, responded to pubhe outcery in an interview with the *LA Times*, saying $23 million had been approved to address the most urgent repairs, with $12 million worth of repairs expected to be completed in 2017. But the city's repair budget is just a drop in the Pacific Ocean compared to the projected $289 million it would take to make the experts' recommended repairs. It's a sum that makes some question if she's worth saving at all.

Even in 1967, a *Times* journalist had to pose the question. "It's hard to decide in one's own mind what the *Queen* deserves. How do you reward former glory and wartime heroism, when in a jet age the ship herself has become redundant?"

Shortly after the ship hit the fan this spring, a new general manager was brought aboard, Stephen Sowards. He has a 25-year hospitality résumé that includes the Marriott and Ritz-Carlton and also has a message for naysayers. "I would say, kindly, 'We're going to make you eat your words,'" he says. "The city of Long Beach is engaged with the *Queen* again to make her the great ship that she once was and always will be."



THE FUTURE

On a recent November evening, just before nightfall, voices of men yelling to one another from somewhere high above could be heard from the parking lot. Scaffolding and white curtains were visible on the decks and up near the *Queen Mary*'s iconic trio of smokestacks—one of which boasted a fresh coat of paint. At the flip of a switch, the middle smokestack suddenly lit up, illuminated with tiny white lights strung like new pearls.

Crews were hard at work tearing down one signature event, the Halloween-themed Dark Harbor, to make way for another, Chill. A stone's throw from the ship, other crews were setting up for a new two-day music and taco festival, Tropicalia, which was "beyond sold out."

That day's buzz of construction and event set-up, plus a full parking lot, all pointed to the promise of the proposed *Queen Mary* Island, whose preliminary plans include an amphitheater, shopping center and Ferris wheel. The $250 million investment seeks to turn the ship and its surrounding areas into what Long Beach city planners had in mind 50 years ago: a must-see entertainment and tourist destination. It's a venture understandably taken with a grain of sea salt, given how many companies and bureaucrats have claimed they'd be the ones to turn the tides, only to abandon ship.

The *Queen* is ingrained in the identity of Long Beach, argues Sowards, adding that every time he visits the city, he meets people who worked at the *Queen Mary*. "I want the city of Long Beach to engage with this ship because the ship belongs to the city of Long Beach," he says. "Every day, they wake up across that bay [and] look at this wonderful icon we have here."

The *Queen Mary* has now spent more time docked in Southern California as a building than she spent at sea. Ironically, she's now neighbors with a Carnival Cruise Ship Terminal. (Carnival purchased the Cunard Line in 1998.)

In her 87 years of existence, the *Queen Mary* has survived the Great Depression, World War II and a cataclysmic collision with the *HMS Curacoa*. She escaped the scrapyard and even Adolf Hitler himself. She remains the only grand British ocean liner of her era standing today.

Her time in Long Beach has been as tragic as it has been triumphant. But her historical significance is undeniable and worthy of preserving. More *Downton Abbey* than *Grey Gardens*, it's arguable that her reputation and legacy is such a point of contention because she has outlived her contemporaries by half a century—and she has the scars to prove it.

She's not just another hotel or tourism boondoggle, but a rare and resplendent time portal that can take you from 1930 to 2017 and each year in between. It's a notion that's not lost on Sowards. "We get to operate in the past, and we get to operate in the present, and we get to operate into the future."

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fri/12/22

[FILM]

Move Over, Krampus!

Christmas Evil

What better way is there to celebrate the holidays than to screen a 4K restoration of a Christmas classic at your favorite indie cinema? No, we don't mean *It's a Wonderful Life*, *Miracle On 34th Street*, *A Christmas Story* or even *Bad Santa*, but rather *Christmas Evil*! The good folks at the Frida Cinema and HorrorBuzz.com are proud to present holiday horror fans with what John Waters has called "the best seasonal film of all time." See Santa go crazy and carve a bloody snow trail in glorious low-budget '80s-horror-film style at this exclusive, one-night screening.

Christmas Evil 4K Restoration at the Frida Cinema, 305 E. Fourth St., Santa Ana, (714) 285-9422, thefridacinema.org. 11 p.m. $7-$10. —SCOTT FEINBLATT

[PERFORMING ARTS]

GORDY'S GOLD

Motown the Musical

With pop and rock music having taken over Broadway, it makes sense that revues revisit music history, if with a confident, often joyfully contrived cohesion. The lyrics and narrative throughline of the ambitious, fast-paced 2013 jukebox musical *Motown* review the life and catalog of legendary producer Berry Gordy in 50 songs, often necessarily abbreviated, as performed by a stable of his stars—Marvin, Diana, Smokey, the Jacksons—in a tribute show meets dance party. Berry's actual biography cedes center stage to the songs he made hits and whose melodies and lyrics have defined American music, culture and politics. These shows are sing-alongs, perfect for holiday audiences.

Motown the Musical at Segerstrom Center for the Arts, 600 Town Center Dr., Costa Mesa, (714) 556-2787, www.scfta.org. 1 & 7:30 p.m. Through Sun. $23-$99. —ANDREW TONKOVICH

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sat/12/23

[CONCERT]

Oi! To the World

The Vandals

Punk legends the Vandals have taken the stage from Coachella to Iraq, and they're bringing you their Christmas Formal for the 22nd year. The punk pranksters continue to show they have what it takes to delight fans and local punks with an entertaining, funny holiday-themed show that includes a brightly decorated tree, gifts, and a Santa Claus sleigh surely set up for the *oohs* and *aahs*. Consider them a four-headed Santa Claus, here to bestow us with gifts of punk rock and goofy rebellion under our tree. Now that's a Santa we can believe in.

The Vandals' 22nd Annual Christmas Formal with Flock of Nu Goo and OZMA at the House of Blues at Anaheim GardenWalk, 400 Disney Way, Ste. 337, Anaheim, (714) 778-2583, www.houseofblues.com/anaheim. 7 p.m. $20-$22.50. —AIMEE MURILLO

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[FAMILY EVENTS]

WINTER IS HERE

Winter Fest

The snow machines are kickstarted once again for Winter Fest, a gargantuan gathering of families romping through a flurry of festivities, including a nightly Christmas tree lighting, a parade, fireworks and beautiful blizzards. Kids and parents can race down SoCal's largest IceTubing Slide, romp through the Candy Cane Carnival, and take a selfie with the Big Red One while trying to convince him you really do deserve the sinister iPhone X. There's also the Holiday Ferris Wheel, Tilt-a-Whirl and Zipper; a petting zoo; and a snowboard simulator—with a slew of Winter Bounce Houses for your sugar-amped tots. Adults can seek solace in the Mistletoe Lounge and enjoy international craft beers, the famous Winter Fest hot chocolate and holiday-themed cocktails. In fact, make it a double.

Winter Fest at OC Fair and Events Center, 88 Fair Dr., Costa Mesa, (714) 855-1187, www.winterfestoc.com. Noon Through Jan. 7, 2018. $5-$65, ride passes sold separately. —SR DAVIES

sun/12/24

[FAMILY EVENTS]

Cool As Ice

Follow Your Heart

Attention, Disnerds of all ages! Watch your favorite Disney characters prance and twirl their way into your heart at this epic *Disney On Ice* show. From Mickey Mouse to Woody and Buzz Lightyear to Joy, Sadness and other Emotions from *Inside Out* to Ariel to Anna and Elsa from *Frozen*, this entertaining and immersive show brings together characters old and new to entice younger audiences and celebrate a new generation of films. Audiences will be enthralled by the show's feel-good storyline, in which the Disney heroes work together to help young hockey player Riley win the big game.

Disney On Ice: Follow Your Heart at the Honda Center, 2695 E. Katella Ave., Anaheim, (714) 704-2500; www.hondacenter.com. 11 a.m. & 3 p.m. $27-$104. —AIMEE MURILLO

[HEALTH & FITNESS]

Run, Run, Rudolphs

Reindeer Run LB

Committed to making community running events a safe, accessible and positive environment, A Better World Running holds various events throughout Southern California to bring race enthusiasts together or inspire others to take up the healthy hobby. Today's Reindeer Run along Belmont Shore offers runners a low-pressure opportunity to meet their fitness goals via 5K, 10K, 15K or half-marathon. Everyone—including newbies, walkers and stragglers—who follows this easy, marked course earns a finisher's medal as well as a goodie bag. So walk—and/or run—your way to a good time.

Reindeer Run LB at 5400 E. Ocean Blvd., Long Beach; www.abetterworldrunning.com. Check in, 6:45 a.m. Registration, $30-$45. —AIMEE MURILLO

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mon/12/25

[NIGHTLIFE]

New Wave to the Grave

New Wave Christmas

Whether you're dealing with holiday burnout, need a Monday-night break or just want to keep the celebration going, good times await you at El Indio, Santa Ana's newest hot spot. Retrospect—one of OC's longest-running DJ nights spinning new wave, postpunk and electronic music—offers a New Wave Christmas, with DJs Virtigo, Mr. Smith, Eser and Frog, who'll be playing selections from their wide stock of dark '80s dance hits along with a plethora of cheesy '80s holiday songs to acknowledge the reason for the season. Head out and have yourself an eclectic little Christmas!

Retrospect: New Wave Christmas at El Indio Botanas y Cerveza, 309 W. Third St., Santa Ana, (714) 547-7858; www.facebook.com/retrospectOC. 9 p.m. Free. 21+. —AIMEE MURILLO

tue/12/26

[TRIBUTE]

Back In the Building

Elvis Dinner Show

In the world of dinner shows, musicians and singers bring unprecedented amounts of talent to the mic. And in a county full of musical dinner shows, La Cave is best known for its selection of tribute acts honoring the legends of yesteryear. The venue's classic lounge vibe is perfect for tonight's Elvis tribute, performed by a longtime Presley impersonator who goes solely by his first name, Ron. Every week, he'll sing the King's catalog of tunes while guests chow down on lobster and steak dinners, bringing back to life one of rock & roll's biggest legends.

Elvis Dinner Show at La Cave, 1695 Irvine Ave., Costa Mesa, (949) 646-7944, www.lacaverestaurant.com. 6 p.m. Free; dinner prices separate. —AIMEE MURILLO

wed/12/27

[ART]

Feathery Friends

'Birds In Art'

This traveling exhibit put together by Wisconsin's Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum features birds of many different feathers in a diverse and loving tribute from dozens of artists and sculptors. Look for a cheerful variety of traditional styles—Japanese ink art, bold and intricate woodcut, understated oil painting, and sculpture work in brass, glass and powerfully solid stone—and a correspondingly expansive variety of perspectives, in which birds in flight, birds in flock or birds all alone signify something subtle but significant. (They are endlessly symbolic little creatures, aren't they?) "Birds In Art" will resume its migratory path in about a month, but for now—like a bird—it's momentarily at rest, and that much lovelier for it.

"Birds In Art" at Fullerton Arboretum, 1900 Associated Rd., Fullerton, (657) 278-3407, fullertonarboretum.org. 8 a.m. Through Jan. 21, 2018. $5 suggested donation. —CHRIS ZIEGLER

[FOOD & DRINK]

WHERE THE WINE FLOWS

Happy Hour Bash & Wine Tasting

You can usually pop in any night of the week for some kind of *desmadre* at El Mercado Modern Cuisine, where Cesar Cerrudo and his crew are turning out exciting original drinks and delicious alta cocina fare. And on Wednesdays, they now offer curated wine flights and plate pairings, the selections will rotate each week, with pours from Mexico, California, Spain and beyond. What sweetens this deal even more is that happy hour runs all Wednesday evening, featuring select $6 craft cocktails, $5 draft beers and $2 off bar bites. An updated list of Mercado's weekly wine-tasting menu is available online. Salud to vinoWednesdays!

Happy Hour Bash & Wine Tasting at El Mercado Modern Cuisine, 301 N. Spurgeon St., Santa Ana, (714) 338-2446, www.facebook.com/mercadomodern. 5 p.m. $5-$16. —CYNTHIA REBOLLEDO

thu/12/28

[CONCERT]

HE'S BAAAAAACK

Snoop Dogg

Few rappers—let alone local ones—in history can compare to Snoop Dogg. Now an elder statesman, Snoop has parlayed his hit-laden career into a touring and marketing empire that has made the Long Beach native into one of the wealthiest in all of music. With the last show of his 2017 tour at the House of Blues, the Doggfather will be in front of a supportive crowd that will clamor to hear his classics as well as cuts from his latest album, *Neva Left*. The collection was released in May and featured guests such as Method Man, Redman, Cypress Hill/Prophets of Rage's B-Real and longtime collaborator Charlie Wilson. At this stop, you can expect late-era Snoop: bouncy tracks with snappy lyrics that will have you dancing and bopping till the early morn'.

Snoop Dogg at the House of Blues at Anaheim GardenWalk, 400 Disney Way, Ste. 337, Anaheim. (714) 778-2583, www.houseofblues.com/anaheim. 8 p.m. $49-$65. —DANIEL KOHN

[COMEDY]

Stoned Silly

Doug Benson

As one of the many comedians who has openly advocated for marijuana use and who has gotten high for the sake of comedy, Doug Benson is someone you feel connected with enough to smoke a blunt and relax together. That's precisely the point of the comedian's long-running podcast, *Getting Doug With High*, during which he brings in a celebrity guest and interviews them on their experiences with pot and cannabis-related trivia, while smoking different strains of sativa or indica through various elaborate pipes. While we don't know for sure whether the Irvine Improv stage allows for marijuana clouds (here's hoping), we know there's a wealth of humor and stoner-related comedy many of us can relate and laugh along to at Benson's special set tonight.

Doug Benson at the Irvine Improv, 527 Spectrum Center Dr., Irvine, (949) 854-5455, irvine.improv.com. 8 p.m. $20. —AIMEE MURILLO

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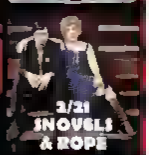

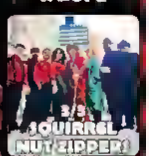

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Tikka Look at This

Indian celebrity chef Sanjeev Kapoor opens his first U.S. restaurant in Buena Park

BY EDWIN GOEI

Have you heard of Sanjeev Kapoor? In India, he's Martha Stewart, Wolfgang Puck and Oprah Winfrey rolled into one. He has a cooking show that's the longest running program of its kind in Asia, a line of appliances, a chain of restaurants, lucrative brand endorsements, publications, even a food channel of his own.

So the first thing you'll see on the marquee for his first U.S. location of the Yellow Chilli is his face, a signal to the Southern California Indian diaspora that he has landed in their backyard. It also distinguishes the place from Torch and Amaya, the two previous Indian restaurants that occupied the Buena Park space before this. (You may better recognize the building as the original home of Ripley's Believe It or Not, OC's pre-eminent showcase of shrunken heads and genetic mutations until *The Real Housewives* premiered.)

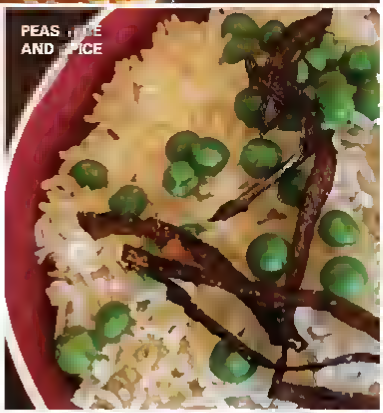
The building—which kind of resembles a Hindu temple, except for the Buddha statue at the top of the structure—has the same layout as its former Indian-restaurant incarnations. There was the clubby-looking dining room, a bar featuring tubes of whirling fire tornados and a walled-off banquet hall. It looked as grand as before—the Taj Mahal of OC Indian restaurants. But just as the last time I visited, there wasn't a single customer when I arrived.

Since it was deserted, it wasn't long before the server came bounding to my table. He was a ball of energy named Rahul. Knowing that a menu that spanned multiple pages would soon overwhelm me, he said he was there to offer recommendations. And he was right: I needed the help. The glossy tome contained dishes I've never heard of or had before, even in Artesia's Indian enclave.

Even if you think you know Indian cuisine because you've eaten at all the lunch buffets around town, that's kindergarten compared to the kind of Ph.D.-level knowledge needed to navigate this menu. Also, since the à la carte entrée prices hover around the $20 mark, I realized this was Indian cuisine for the fluent and affluent.

When I encountered an appetizer described as "topped with loads of fabulous stuff," I knew I needed Rahul to guide me through the jungle. For a starter, he nudged me toward the pakoda basket: fritters made with bits of potato, cauliflower, onion, spinach, green chile and cottage cheese. They were good, but different than pakodas I've had in the past—these were breadier, almost like tiny beignets. But since it came out scarcely two minutes after he took my order, I began to suspect Rahul recommended it because he knew a fresh batch had just been made for the private party in the banquet hall.

INSERT BUTTER NAAN (RIGHT) INTO BOWL (LEFT)



PEAS PULAO AND SPICE

PHOTOS BY TAYLOR HAMBY

My suspicions were somewhat confirmed when he offered complimentary samples of spicy, battered chunks of white fish called "Amritsari Macchi," which were almost exactly like the ones I've eaten at Lenten fish fries, except with shotgun blasts of garam masala instead of plain salt.

Other dishes didn't take long to arrive. Since there was a full-page picture declaring it one of the restaurant's best-selling dishes, I ordered the lalla mussa dal, a black lentil-based stew slow-cooked on a low fire for 36 hours until the legumes surrendered all their silkiness. The resulting consistency was somewhere between chowder and full-fat refried beans. What I liked most, though, was how its slow and steady burn simmered in my mouth the entire night. Think of classic New Orleans red beans and rice, then set it ablaze.

For a meat entrée, I settled on the chicken tikka masala like a Know-Nothing American. But to eat with it, Rahul recommended the butter naan. "Doesn't it come with rice?" I asked him.

"No, it doesn't, but the rice is on me if you order the naan. You must try the naan!" he implored.

I did, remembering that Northern Indians eat more bread than rice. And again, he was right. Although the naan was thick in parts and thin in others, it was just the thing to sop up the dish, which turned out to be one of the boldest and spiciest tikka masalas I've had in OC.

Sanjeev Kapoor the Celebrity Chef may indeed be the face on the sign outside, but for me, it was Rahul the Server who was the true ambassador of his brand that night. As he said his bonus depended on it, Rahul begged me to write a Yelp review. I told him I'd do better than that. So, Mr. Kapoor, if you're reading this, give the dude a raise!

THE YELLOW CHILLI
7850 Beach Blvd., Buena Park, (714) 523-8880; theyellowchillibp.com. Open for lunch, daily, noon-3 p.m.; for dinner, Mon.-Thurs., 5-10 p.m., Fri.-Sun., 5-10:30 p.m. Entrées, $12-$22. Full bar.

WHAT THE ALE
» ROBERT FLORES

Crafty Crew

BOARD & BREW
15040 Kensington Park Dr., Ste. 200, Tustin, (714) 389-1422, www.boardandbrew.com

Since it was founded in Del Mar in 1979, Board & Brew has kept things simple: hearty sandwiches and great craft beer. And the Southern California chain recently opened its seventh location at the Village at Tustin Legacy.

It has already won over patrons with its commitment to using the freshest ingredients possible, including the bread that's delivered daily. The straightforward menu features wraps, soups and salads, as well as a selection of local, hard-to-find microbrews from San Diego and Orange County.

The available brews are displayed on a digital board created by DigitalPour that lists the beer's name, style and ABV/IBU, what glassware is used, the price per glass, and a real-time reading of the keg level. There's even a countdown clock for happy hour!

Franchise owner Mike Williams keeps a great rotation of the beers on tap, and the knowledgeable Board & Brew crew are very helpful in deciding which craft beers to pair with your meal.

To accompany the sandwich, I started with Goodland Orange, a 4.5 percent ABV pale ale from Telegraph Brewing in Santa Barbara. Whole pureed oranges from Goleta zest your palate on the front end, while cascade hops add a nice, tight finish. Next up was the Oatmeal Raisin Cookie Ale (5.5 percent ABV) from Aftershock Brewing in Temecula. I've had similar flavoring but in a stout, so I was curious how this would go down. The aroma of oatmeal, vanilla and cinnamon hits before you even take a sip; it's like drinking sweet brown sugar. I finished with Echoes from Oncent Brewing in San Juan Capistrano. This 7.2 percent ABV brew was a spot-on hoppy AF West Coast IPA with notes of tropical fruit. One of the newer breweries, Oncent puts out quality craft beer using the best ingredients.

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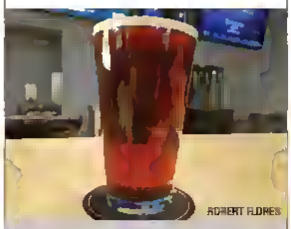

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COURTESY OF ANTONELLO RISTORANTE

Auld Lang Dine

A guide to dining in OC on New Year's Eve

BY CYNTHIA REBOLLEDO

To help you keep it easy and festive as you enter 2018, we've compiled a guide to the best places to enjoy a champagne toast and a special dinner.

ANTONELLO RISTORANTE
Ring in the New Year with this special late-night dinner, highlighted by house-made ravioli and black truffle in a creamy mascarpone sauce, carpaccio heirloom tomatoes topped with baby arugula and burrata cheese, and a peppercorn-crusted petit filet served in a barolo wine reduction. The evening includes a complimentary midnight prosecco toast, or celebrate with exclusive Hello Kitty sparkling wine for only $8 more. *3800 S. Plaza Dr., Santa Ana, (714) 751-7153; antonello.com.*

FOUNDATION ROOM AT HOUSE OF BLUES
Raise your champagne glasses in the glamorous Foundation Room. The night's theme is glamour and gold, so come decked out in your best digs and be ready to dance and mingle the night away. Enjoy live entertainment from Michael Dean Band and DJ Red as you experience tasty cuisine and craft cocktails. Want the VIP treatment? Upgrade your night with a beverage package that includes reserved seating for you and all your friends. *400 Disney Way, Ste. 337, Anaheim, (714) 520-2398; www.houseofblues.com/anaheim/fr*

BACK BAY BISTRO
Newport Dunes Waterfront Resort sends off 2017 country-style with a Boots On the Beach New Year's Eve party for the whole family. It will be an evening of celebration featuring live music, food trucks, full bars, craft beer and whiskey tasting, and a cigar bar, country and western merchandise will also be available for purchase. Enjoy a bayfront view before the concert at Back Bay Bistro, which offers a VIP package with seatings at 6 p.m. and a four-course dinner along with special concert seating. *1131 Back Bay Dr., Newport Beach, (949) 729-1144, www.backbaybistronewportbeach.com.*

FARMHOUSE AT ROGER'S GARDENS
Owner/executive chef Rich Mead hosts a special celebration on the beautiful terrace overlooking Roger's Gardens scenic greenery. Each ticket includes a champagne toast, a signature New Year's Eve cocktail, gourmet bites—a selection of highly curated cheese and charcuterie served with an assortment of crudité—and access to the Farmhouse photo booth in the beautiful garden. Note that dinner reservations may be made separately. *2301 San Joaquin Hills Rd., Corona Del Mar, (949) 640-1415; farmhouserg.com.*

EL MERCADO MODERN CUISINE
Enjoy your last brunch of 2017 with huevos ahogados (poached eggs in a savory estofado broth that's served with rustic toast for dipping), burnt piloncillo buttermilk pancakes that are ridiculously fluffy and mimosas. And from 6 p.m. to midnight, feast on the restaurant's wonderful regular menu, plus a champagne toast. *301 N. Spurgeon St., Santa Ana, (714) 338-2446; www.mercadomodern.com.*

BAYSIDE RESTAURANT
If you're just looking to have a nice dinner before you turn up for a night on the town, Bayside Restaurant has you covered with tasty tapas and meat and seafood dishes right off the grill. *900 Bayside Dr., Newport Beach, (949) 721-1222, baysiderestaurant.com.*

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New Mexico Holiday

Christmas-style stacked enchiladas at Panxa Cocina

GABRIEL SAN ROMAN

Whenever I've told my Mexi friends about stacked enchiladas, they've assailed the dish as a casserole catastrophe. The mistake is totally understandable, since Anita's Restaurant in Fullerton shuttered years ago, there haven't been many (if any!) restaurants in Southern California to introduce people to New Mexico's way of eating enchiladas.

Thankfully, Panxa Cocina in Long Beach offers a take that will leave the uninitiated satiated. The alta cocina's menu features Navajo tacos and Chimayo pozole, but with the holiday season in full-swing, order the Christmas-style stacked enchiladas. With a choice of short rib, pork or chicken to fill the layers, the plate is a satisfying portion without being hefty. And don't forget to order it with a fried egg on top—it's well worth it, as the creamy yolk works its way into every bite, accentuating the flavors.

For whatever reason, my family ditched the sunny-side-up-egg topper generations ago. My *abuela* didn't bother when she made stacked enchiladas for my *abuelo*, who hailed from La Union, New Mexico; my mother also served them without their crown of yolk. But now I know what I've been missing! Not only does the egg add another runny texture to the red and green Christmas-style salsas that slather the dish, but it's practical, too, because the hatch chile don't play! A couple of *gabachos* seated behind me on my last visit sniffled and coughed their way through the dish, but if they had just spent the $2 more, they would have learned how the yolk becomes a flavorful way to neutralize the heat at the right moments. No enchilada casserole can claim all that!

Now, if only sopaipillas returned to Panxa Cocina for dessert, it'd be a true land of enchantment!

PANXA COCINA
3937 E. Broadway, Long Beach, (562) 433-7999; panxacocina.com

EatThisNow

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DrinkoftheWeek

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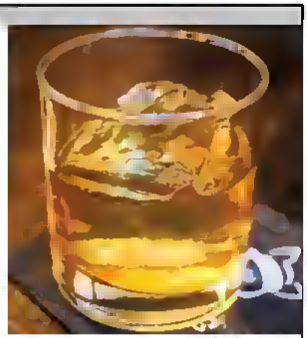
Flame On at the Blind Pig


CYNTHIA REBOLLEDO

Complementing executive chef Karl Pfleider's exceptional menu offerings are the Blind Pig's standout craft cocktail pairings. Spirit animal Ryan Autry has created an impressive program that ranges from light and refreshing to booze-forward, employing inventive techniques to turn out complex but easy-to-enjoy concoctions. First-timers should try the Flame On.

THE DRINK

A powerful union of Bruxo No. 1 espadín agave mezcal and chipotle-infused Dolin Rouge vermouth becomes tamed when combined with bittersweet Gran Classico and Forbidden bitters, giving off a full-bodied earthy aroma. This drink gets smoked with a large, hand-cut ice cube to stimulate the already peated mezcal. The secret? Science! The result? Delicious and smoky AF!

THE BLIND PIG
31431 Santa Margarita Pkwy., Rancho Santa Margarita, (949) 888-0072, www.theblindpigoc.com

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It's a Small World After All

Downsizing displays our crazy, mixed-up world at 5 inches tall

BY AIMEE MURILLO

Our complex human nature and strong belief in capitalism is such that the storyline of Alexander Payne's *Downsizing* is not only believable, but also probable. In the film, Norwegian scientists have developed a way to physically shrink inanimate objects and life forms, including humans, to 0.0364 percent of their original size and volume, touting it as a way to offer relief to the Earth and its resources strained from overpopulation. Over the course of a decade, downsizing becomes a corporatized process, and volunteering for the irreversible procedure allows American middle-class citizens to exponentially increase their financial assets and move into over-the-top McMansions like royals.

Downsizing operates within the realm of science-fiction, but Payne and co-writer Jim Taylor ground the film in realism by slowly peeling away the darker layers of society lurking underneath the paradise. The story takes a close-up look at the inhabitants of the miniaturized, planned-living community, Leisureland. (Refugees, Third World immigrants and other undesirables are downsized against their will and sent to live in a large tenement building separated from the rest of Leisureland by a giant wall.)

Among them is Jason Sudeikis' Dave, a de facto recruiter for Leisureland, who is too eager to reap the luxuries afforded from downsizing to pay heed to its environmental benefits. And Christoph Waltz's Serbian playboy Dusan smuggles in bootleg Cuban cigars, shrugging off the dangers of the trade by saying, "You think people would care about a 5-inch Serbian guy selling Cuban cigars? This is the Wild West, baby."

All of this is witnessed firsthand by Paul Safranek (Matt Damon), an Everyman who works as an occupational therapist at Omaha Steaks. Paul is initially amazed by the scientific breakthrough, but his nice but self-involved wife, Audrey (Kristen Wiig), decides they should trade in their dreary lives for fortune. However, at the last minute, Audrey decides against the process, leaving Paul to adjust to tiny life alone.

A year later, a divorced Paul has traded in his epic estate for a midsized apartment. Through his neighbor Dusan, Paul meets Ngoc Lan Tran (Hong Chau), Dusan's maid who was a dissident Vietnamese refugee downsized against her will with others and smuggled in inside a box, then lost her leg to gangrene. A former activist, Ngoc Lan is a firecracker, a tough-talking, hardheaded woman who shows kindness and charity toward her friends and neighbors in her multilingual apartment building.

After subsequently breaking her prosthetic leg while trying to fix it, Paul begrudgingly runs errands with Ngoc Lan in her community. The two take a trip with Dusan and his business associate Konrad (Udo Kier) to Norway to visit the colony of original downsizing guinea pigs living there. Paul and Ngoc Lan fall in love, and Paul must decide which fate to choose for himself and his personal happiness.

What I appreciate most about Payne and Taylor's treatment is that at every stage of development, there's a debate on the ethics of such an idea happening in the first place. From Paul's mother to belligerent barflies to cable-news analysts, this utopic dream is challenged by skeptics and contrarians, as it probably would be in today's media climate.

Most astute of all is the film's insight into what downsizing promises as a whole: a new frontier, as well as a chance to truly enjoy the fruits of "making it" in America that generations of people have felt entitled to through capitalism. While conceived to grant everyone a fair shot at living deliciously, Leisureland ends up being a microcosm of the world we live in now: privilege and spoils for some, and poverty and struggle for the rest. We really can't have nice things, can we?

Payne, already known for the cinematic stunners *Sideways*, *The Descendants* and *Nebraska*, is working outside his genre wheelhouse, but he knows his strength is creating fully realized characters, the best one here being Ngoc Lan. As of press time, Chau had been nominated for a Golden Globe for Best Supporting Actress and a SAG for Best Actress, and she deserves both. Among a star-studded cast, Chau is a revelation.

The film's ending, as well as Paul and Ngoc's romance, feel a little tacked-on, but that doesn't take away from *Downsizing*'s excellent use of humor, satire and social commentary. In this moment in history, *Downsizing* has enough weight to be considered one of the best dystopian comedies of our time. You don't need a microscope to help you see that.

AMURILLO@OCWEEKLY.COM

DOWNSIZING
was directed by Alexander Payne, written by Payne and Jim Taylor, and stars Matt Damon, Christoph Waltz, Kristen Wiig, Udo Kier, Hong Chau, Neil Patrick Harris, Laura Dern and Jason Sudeikis

Paging Nos. 1 and 12 . . .

BY MATT COKER

Love Actually From 2003, love-struck characters played by Hugh Grant, Colin Firth, Andrew Lincoln, Keira Knightley, Laura Linney, Alan Rickman, Emma Thompson and Liam Neeson try to make their romantic dreams come true during the holiday season. But the scene stealer is Bill Nighy as cynical aging rocker Billy Mack. *The Frida Cinema, 305 E. Fourth St., Santa Ana, thefridacinema.org. Fri., 7:30 p.m., also Dec. 30, 1:30 p.m. $7-$10.*

Christmas Evil. HorrorBuzz.com presents a 4K restoration of Lewis Jackson's 1980 horror classic about a toy-factory worker who was mentally scarred as a child upon learning Santa Claus is not real. One day, while looking into the mirror after applying shaving cream to his face, he hallucinates that he has a white beard, believes he is Kris Kringle and starts spying on neighborhood children to find out who is naughty or nice. Then comes the killing spree . . . *The Frida Cinema, thefridacinema.org. Fri., 11 p.m. $7-$10.*

Scrooged. In this 1988 rewrung of the Dickens classic, Bill Murray plays TV executive Frank Cross, who is planning a live and largely inappropriate adaptation of *A Christmas Carol*. That's because Frankie is all about the ratings. The Christmas spirit? Not so much. And so he is visited by the ghosts of Christmas past, present and future, the latter of whom fails to show him footage of the off-key singing in *A Very Murray Christmas*. *The Frida Cinema, thefridacinema.org. Sat.-Sun., 3:15 p.m., Thurs., Dec. 28, 5:30 & 9:30 p.m. $7-$10; also at Regency Directors Cut Cinema at Rancho Niguel, 25471 Rancho Niguel Rd., Laguna Niguel, (949) 831-0446. Tues., 7:30 p.m. $5.*

Gremlins. A boy inadvertently breaks three important rules concerning his new pet, unleashing a horde of malevolently mischievous monsters on a small town in this 1984 horror comedy. *The Frida Cinema, thefridacinema.org. Sat., 5:30 p.m. $7-$10.*

Black Clover. In a world where magic is everything, Yuno, who is gifted with exceptional magical powers, and Asta, the only person in the world without any, are found abandoned as babies at a church on the same day. At age 15, both receive magic books, and Asta's newfound anti-magic powers allow him to negate Yuno's spells as both seek to become the Wizard King. *The Frida Cinema, thefridacinema.org. Sat., 1:30 p.m. $7-$10.*

Five Summer Stories, Dolphins* and *Grand Canyon Adventure. River at Risk. Bring low-backed beach chairs and blankets to see 1972's *Five Summer Stories*, which features David Nuuhiwa, Eddie Aikau, Gerry Lopez and Sam Hawkins in an examination of Hawaii and Southern California's surfing lifestyle. From 2000, MacGillivray's *Dolphins* studies the mammals' behavior and intelligence. MacGillivray's 2008 *Grand Canyon Adventure. River at Risk* uses a rafting tour to document the environmental consequences of our current Colorado River use. *Park Plaza, 200 block of Park Avenue, Laguna Beach, (949) 497-3311. Sat., 6 p.m. Free.*

The Rocky Horror Picture Show. Midnight insanity shadow casts the movie that has the car of sweethearts Brad and Janet (Barry Bostwick and Susan Sarandon) breaking down near the eerie mansion of Dr. Frank-N-Furter (Tim Curry), a transvestite scientist whose home also hosts a rocking biker (Meat Loaf), a creepy butler (Richard O'Brien) and assorted freaks, including a hunk of beefcake named "Rocky." *Art Theatre, 2025 E. Fourth St., Long Beach, (562) 438-5435. Sat., 11:55 p.m. $11.50-$11.50.*

Eyes Wide Shut. Stanley Kubrick died six days after the first test screening of his final film, which proved to be just as polarizing as most of the master's other pictures. *The Frida Cinema, thefridacinema.org. Sun., 2 p.m. $7-$10.*

Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb. Frida's monthlong Stanley Kubrick tribute comes to an end with a weeklong run of his 1964 political-satire black comedy that is loosely based on Peter George's thriller novel *Red Alert*. An unhinged U.S. Air Force general (George C. Scott) orders the first nuclear attack on the Soviet Union. The President of the United States (Peter Sellers), his advisers, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and a Royal Air Force officer (also Sellers) try to recall the bombers to prevent a nuclear apocalypse. *The Frida Cinema, thefridacinema.org. Tues.-Thurs., Dec. 26-28, 5, 7 & 9 p.m., also Dec. 31, 1:30 p.m. $7-$10.*

National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation. Everyone's favorite family, the Griswolds, is encouraged by patriarch Clark (Chevy Chase) to bask in the holiday spirit just as he is. However, that offer must be extended to cousin Eddie (Randy Quaid) and other family members who unexpectedly show up at the home of Clark and Ellen (Beverly D'Angelo). *The Frida Cinema, thefridacinema.org. Tues., 5:30, 7:30 & 9:30 p.m., Thurs., Dec. 28, 7:30 p.m., also Dec. 30, 4:30 p.m. $7-$10.*

Doctor Who: Twice Upon a Time. Simulcast in theaters is the epic finale to the Peter Capaldi era. As the 12th doctor, he comes face to face with . . . himself, embarking on an adventure with the first doctor (David Bradley, who plays Fitch in the *Harry Potter* movies). *AMC Orange 30 at the Outlets, 20 City Blvd. W., Orange, (714) 769-4288; Edwards Aliso Viejo Stadium 20, 26701 Aliso Creek Rd., Aliso Viejo, (844) 462-7342; Edwards Irvine Spectrum 21, 65 Fortune Dr., Irvine, (844) 462-7342; Edwards Long Beach Stadium 26, 7501 E. Carson, Long Beach, (844) 462-7342. Sat. only. Cinemark Century Stadium 25, 1701 W. Katella Ave., Orange, (714) 532-9558, Cinemark Century 20 Huntington Beach, 7777 Edinger Ave., Huntington Beach, (714) 373-4573, www.fathomevents.com. Wed.-Thurs., Dec. 27-28, 7 p.m. $10.50-$12.50.*

There's No Business Like Show Business. Walter Lang directed this 1954 Irving Berlin musical about the family act the Five Donahues, which is led by father Terry (Dan Dailey) and mother Molly (Ethel Merman). But it falls apart after their son Tim (Donald O'Connor) meets hat-check girl Vicky (Marilyn Monroe). *Regency South Coast Village, 1561 Sunflower Ave., Santa Ana, (714) 557-5701. Wed., 7:30 p.m. $9.*

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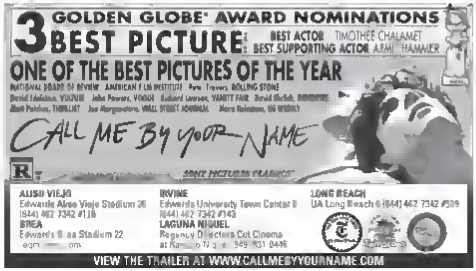

Nutcracker for Adults

Sandra Tsing Loh's *Sugar Plum Fairy* is better than ballet

BY JOEL BEERS

DEBORA ROBINSON/SCR

Whether through dumb luck or plain-ol' common sense, some of us successfully avoid painful calamities, such as contracting gonorrhea or extended stays in a federal penitentiary. For instance, I have never seen a full, live production of *The Nutcracker*. While I know it's always produced during the holidays and have nothing against classical music, I also know it's a ballet, and short of contracting gonorrhea during an extended prison stay, there are few things that sound less appealing to these trailer-park-by-way-of-Philistia sensibilities.

So when word came down that noted writer, performer and NPR commentator Sandra Tsing Loh was dusting off her 2003 piece *Sugar Plum Fairy*, and then South Coast Repertory's promotional materials stated it was about the Southern California native's childhood obsession with *The Nutcracker*, I was underwhelmed.

But duty calls, and Loh is a ferociously talented and witty writer, so I put on my big-boy reviewer pants and walked into the theater with as open of a mind as possible, even though I was sure that the beauty and elegance of any ballet would be lost on me.

Whether it was the law of diminished expectations, or the fact that this is a blisteringly funny and bittersweet examination of enduring one of life's crushing disappointments (far more bitter than sweet), I enjoyed nearly every moment of the approximately 75-minute show. Sure, there are ballet references throughout that I would need a glossary to make sense of, and yes, the story does follow a grown woman reminiscing about her 12-year-old self hungering for a lead role in *The Nutcracker*, but it is about far more than that. And all of it is relayed in such an energetic, lacerating and sharp fashion by the three-person cast and director Bart DeLorenzo that it's impossible to not be enraptured the entire time.

Though it began as a one-woman show, Loh has obviously worked on the piece, which begins with her walking onto a stage decked out in the worst excesses of a mall Santa display, dressed as a Christmas tree, and singing one of the most saccharine Christmas songs of all, *Sleigh Bells*. Joined by two overhearingly cheerful elven henchpeople (Shannon Holt and Tony Abatemarco, who play multiple characters throughout), Loh tosses candy to the audience while switching the lyrics to recount some of 2017's less-than-stellar events. But a technical malfunction ensues, and the production grinds to a halt. Efforts to resuscitate a dead electronic Santa fail, and Loh frees herself of her garish costume and decides to tell a different Christmas story, one about her.

Loh sets the tableau by nailing what living in Southern California was like in the 1970s, from the burnt-orange shag carpet to the avocado-green kitchen appliances, and then describes her family dynamic: a mother who drives her two daughters—the older one an ice-princess perfectionist (a faceless mannequin held by Holt) who is always in the front seat, the younger, artistic, back-seat-confined Loh—to a prestigious ballet academy in Chatsworth, about an hour from their home.

When it's announced that the academy is holding auditions for the aforementioned *Nutcracker*, the sibling rivalry hits fever pitch, as Loh's sister is obviously the more technically proficient dancer, but Loh is hell-bent on landing the role of Clara (apparently a big deal). The arrival of two famous Russian ballet stars who will oversee the auditions further intensifies the process.

It's clear that between her soon-to-be-realized body issues, her sister (who is occasionally actually played by Holt) and another *wünderkind* fellow student (portrayed, via lights, as a twirling snowflake on the stage floor), Loh has no chance to land a key role. But when she discovers that she is exiled to the huge, faceless ensemble, she is confronted for the first time with the harsh reality that even though most of us grow up buying into the canard that we can be whatever we want to be, life invariably has other plans.

And that is the theme that courses through *Sugar Plum Fairy*, whether it's through Loh's recounting of the main story or her frequent, hilarious interactions with the audience, usually while gorging on Fritos, downing peppermint schnapps and gulping down Aleve, as a 55-year-old mother of two teen daughters. That life is filled with disappointment after disappointment, few things work out as we envision, not everyone is as special as they think they are, and, even though we're convinced every time Lucy holds that goddamn football that we're finally going to kick it, it's always going to be snatched away at the last second.

But the resilient ones keep hoping and keep trying. And the best of that lot turn the angst of adolescence and bitterness of maturity into engaging, raucously funny and oddly inspiring stories such as *Sugar Plum Fairy*.

SUGAR PLUM FAIRY

at South Coast Repertory, 655 Town Center Dr., Costa Mesa, (714) 708-5555, www.scr.org. Thurs.-Fri., Dec. 21-22, 7:45 p.m.; Sat.-Sun., 2 & 7:45 p.m. $23-$83

TrendZilla

» AIMEE MURILLO

That's a Wrap!

Before you wrap up those Christmas presents and nestle them lovingly under your tree, consider this: Wrapping paper is one of the most wasteful products used during the holiday season, and we humans discard up to 4 million pounds of it annually. Despite the fact that wrapping paper is slightly eco-friendly—it is composed of unbleached wood pulp and natural and synthetic dyes—it's not designed for long-term use, so you can only really reuse a sheet up to two times before it's trashed. Because of the way it's dyed and laminated, it often contains plastic, glitter and fibers, making it impossible to recycle the same way as normal paper.

While studies and seasonal PSAs have long warned against both the excess amounts of trash produced and the number of trees used to make wrapping paper (up to 50,000, according to a 2006 *Guardian* study), consumers still willfully purchase cheap, brightly decorated wrap. So to avoid another year of waste production while still keeping up the festive tradition of wrapping presents for loved ones, here's some cool ideas for what to use instead:

- Plenty of online sites advocate for using colorful, used magazine pages to wrap gifts, but that's equally wasteful. Instead, use 100 percent recycled materials such as cardboard boxes, old newspapers, toilet paper rolls, cereal boxes or butcher paper. Any tissue paper used to line gift boxes is also unrecyclable, but it's totally reusable for future presents or crafty projects.
- Skip paper altogether and use fabric from old clothes or scarves, tote bags, tea towels or fabric bags.
- For small gifts, use mason jars, decorative tins, baskets or plastic containers.

If you caved and already wrapped your gifts with wrapping paper, save it for craft projects. Try making origami, paper beads or book covers, or use it to line drawers or cupboards. Using your imagination to save more waste from a landfill is a gift to Mother Nature in itself!

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The Last Record Store Standing

Dr. Freecloud's won't suffer Fountain Valley's gentrification quietly

BY BRITTANY WOOLSEY

DR. FREECLOUD'S FLOATS ON

Although he's being forced to move his record store, the music isn't being silenced for Ron Dedmon.

Following the October announcement of the planned rehabilitation of the Fountain Valley Square Shopping Center, which was built in the 1970s, Dedmon will have to find new digs for his Dr. Freecloud's Record Shoppe. The renovation has forced several shop owners, who have been under month-to-month leases, to either move or close down for good, said Dedmon, whose shop has been at 18960 Brookhurst Street for 13 years.

Dedmon says he had originally wanted to re-sign his lease and even agreed to pay double his current rent, but he couldn't comply with the plaza owners' demand that he close up shop during the construction. The owners also told him he must pay four months of rent upfront in order to stay, he says. "That just sounded ridiculous. We just thought they were trying to throw us a high number so we would leave. Technically, we could have come up with the money, but we didn't think it was fair for us to pay when we couldn't do business for the 11 months while the center was undergoing its renovations. No right-minded person is going to do that."

According to Joshua Binkley, a representative of Sweetzer Building, which owns the plaza, security deposits were based on a number of factors, including credit of the tenant and history with payment.

Prior to the notice to vacate, Dedmon says, he never had any issues with the owners, with whom he communicated through emails and phone calls. He says he and the owners agreed to a lowered rent if Dedmon helped to keep the center clean and safe by informing the owners of homeless people who would camp in the center overnight and leave trash.

Binkley says Fountain Valley Square Shopping Center tenants were offered spare in the adjacent Fountain Valley Plaza, which is also owned by Sweetzer Building and houses businesses such as Prehistoric Pets, and that several took the deal. Though Dedmon thought of moving there, he says he was told the owners were only allowing three-year leases; he believes Fountain Valley Plaza will also be rebranded after Fountain Valley Square Shopping Center's rehabilitation is complete.

Dedmon considers the renovations to be motivated by gentrification. In a shopping center once filled with mom-and-pop ramen restaurants, novelty gift shops and Asian markets, corporate stores such as Grocery Outlet are slated to move in. The McDonald's and Carl's Jr. currently in Fountain Valley Square Shopping Center will remain, Binkley says.

According to Dedmon, there are rumors that his wing of the center will become a medical suite. "That has to be the worst idea," he says. "They're kind of sucking the soul out of the center. It's becoming, once again, uninteresting for me to be here, even though I fell in love with this center initially. Almost the whole Asian theme of the center has been chased out over the years."

Binkley claims the center's rehabilitation is an effort to address significant repairs and upgrades to site lighting, landscaping, storm drainage and electric; the parking lot and drive areas will also be reconstructed. Binkley anticipates construction will last 180 days. "Ownership desires to reinvest in the property so that the shopping center will be an asset to both the community and the patrons who shop there," he says. "Accordingly, ownership has begun the task of a complete and comprehensive remodel of the buildings and site. ... In light of the foregoing facts, safety considerations and liability considerations, [the] landlord determined that it would not be prudent to allow tenants to operate during the remodel."

Also leaving the center is California Shabu Shabu, which operated in the center for 20 years. The hot pot restaurant's owner, Wayne Atchley, says he will instead be more present at his Costa Mesa location, which is run by Orange County restaurateur Leonard Chan.

Among the first tenants informed of the renovation was Two Brothers Pizza, which closed in November. "The owners of Two Brothers are the nicest people," Dedmon says. "A lot of good customers came in to help them, and I think one person actually inquired about buying the restaurant and bringing in the old owners to help them run it."

Chris Sarvis of Foothill Ranch started a GoFundMe account to help the pizzeria owners relocate.

Dedmon is determined to move his shop to another location in Fountain Valley and is currently negotiating for a nearby space that is the same size as his current shop. "There's one space we found that we really love, and it's been a lot of hard work to get it," he says. "It looks like it's coming around. We're crossing our fingers.

"We want to continue to serve our local community," he adds. "We get people who ride their bikes here or walk here, so we still want to make sure we're here for those types of people. That's the kind of crowd we love and love being open for."

Dr. Freecloud's first opened in Costa Mesa in 1994, no matter the city it was in, the shop has been frequented by audiophiles looking for records in genres such as dance, hip-hop and rock, as well as for specialty equipment. Dedmon has also been known to deejay as Ron D Core. Every year, the shop hosts an anniversary party, and its 23rd on Dec. 10 included sets from local and well-known DJs, as well as food from eateries such as Naugles and Glee Donuts & Burgers.

For the past decade, Dedmon says, his shop has been nicknamed "the last record store standing" because of its support for electronic dance music and its subgenres. "That has set us apart as an indie store with extras," he says. "Obviously, now that [the vinyl industry] has been cooling up for the past three or four years, we're sort of seeing some of these newer stores popping up and the resurgence of some shops. I think we've played a very good role in that. ... Moving makes it kind of bittersweet, but the more we tell customers what's going on, they understand our story. No matter where we go, they'll follow us. That's reassuring to know that they're still going to be very supportive."

WAX MASTER RON D. CORE

PHOTOS COURTESY OF RON DEDMON

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COURTESY OF 95.5 KTST FM

Can't Break the Breeze

BENNY THE BREEZE FUNDRAISER at Ed's Stumble Inn, 8896 Warner Ave., Fountain Valley, (714) 841-6245. Jan. 27. Call for time and ticket pricing.

If you consider yourself a fan of local radio, there's a good chance you've recently noticed the absence of one of its loudest, most gravelly voiced personalities: KTST-FM 99.5's Benny "The Breeze" Brezanich. While most people were having dinner and enjoying their last few moments of relaxation at the end of the week end, the longtime lord of all things metal was in the studio, prepping his playlist to deliver one last shock of guitar-driven mayhem to the airwaves and the internet stream via *The Sunday Night Sendoff*. And for musicians, it was one of the few places to get free airplay, late-night interviews, and enjoy a cold brew or two off the air between tracks while Brezanich regaled them with his rock & roll war stories, largely culled from the Aqua Net '80s.

He's also the host of *Wednesday Night Mayhem* and *Thursday Night Huge Show*, both also on KTST.

But while doing some electrical work on the studio building the week before Thanksgiving, Brezanich fell through an 8-foot drop ceiling and hit the concrete floor, landing on his head and neck. "I was up on the ceiling, pulling some wire through to the board, and while I was on my knees, I missed turning around, and it felt like someone pushed me out of the ceiling, but it was all my fault anyway," Brezanich says during a recent phone call while laid up in a full neck brace. He had been rushed to the UCI Trauma Center in Orange, where doctors told him he'd fractured his spine around his neck. They immediately operated on him to repair damage to his T1-C6 vertebrae.

Doctors told him that his injuries were inches away from causing permanent paralysis. "Now, I have rods and screws holding it together," Brezanich says. "I can walk and talk. I'm not paralyzed, but the recovery is gonna take a while because of the nerve damage that was sustained."

No doubt the Breeze got lucky. Unfortunately, he lacks insurance to help him pay the mounting medical bills. The charges so far include the surgery and a one-week stay at the Trauma Center, but forthcoming expenses include rehab and possibly follow-up surgery. In addition to a January fundraiser at Ed's Stumble Inn, there's a GoFundMe campaign with a goal of raising $50,000. Brezanich says any surplus from the campaign will go to the UCI Trauma Center. "No amount is too small," he wrote in the campaign's description. "I greatly appreciate any and all help in the matter."

In the meantime, Brezanich vows to return to the mic, as talking is one of the few functions he's still pretty good at. He's in good spirits, and from the resolve in his voice, he'll be back in the studio sooner than expected. He's already working out a plan to finish the job that nearly paralyzed him.

"I'm gonna see how long I'm supposed to keep the neck brace on," he says. "As soon as my partner comes back from vacation, we're gonna finish all the electrical stuff and get back on the air. I can't just sit dormant; I'm not one of those dormant dudes."

NJACKSON@OCWEEKLY.COM

LocalsOnly
» NATE JACKSON

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COURTESY OF JACKIE CASE

A Classic Voice, a Poet's Heart

Troubadour Cory Case made an impact on OC music

BY NATE JACKSON

On Dec. 7, at approximately 7:10 p.m., a man was struck and killed by a lifted Chevy pickup while crossing the street in Anaheim. For the local music community, the loss of Cory Case is a devastating blow, one that cost us a talented musician with a classic voice, a poet's heart and endless potential.

Case, who'd been a local fixture at bars such as the Port in his native Corona Del Mar, as well as venues including Bobby V's, the Blue Beet, King's Inn and the Rusty Pelican, died at the age of 31. As of press time, authorities were still searching for the driver.

Many of Case's longtime supporters remember his music as far back as the mid-2000s, when he would play with a host of bands including the Licks and the Shys as well as solo. His sound was often simple, the kind of songs not meant to reinvent the wheel, but rather to redeem the soul. Raised on the psalms of Bob Dylan, the crystalline tone of Jim Croce and the weathered wisdom of Van Morrison, Case synthesized his influences through the prism of Orange County while tapping into the human condition in a way that allowed you to experience an entire lifetime in a single song.

One of Case's noted local achievements was winning Best Live Acoustic Act at the 2009 OC Music Awards. As a beloved fixture on the acoustic circuit, Case was constantly playing and writing songs and touring either solo or with a band. "Cory was like a folk act from the '70s," says Ali Zadeh, the owner of the Port. She had known him for almost 10 years. "His demeanor and his lifestyle were simple; [they] made you wonder if he was from a different era. He was very pure, both as a person and a musician."

Case's music helped the musician through some extremely difficult times, including recovering from a brutal beating at the hands of some thugs at a party in Huntington Beach in 2010. Case had fallen asleep at the party and was woken up by two men hurling their fists—and anti-gay slurs—at him. The beating left Case, who was not gay, with a broken nose and a shattered eye socket; his parents had to pay the $7,000 in medical bills. Case's attackers were never caught.

"When he was all bandaged up and couldn't even breathe through his nose, he was still writing songs about it," his brother Tyler says. "He didn't let it phase him whatsoever."

Seven years later, after transplanting from OC to Utah, Case met his wife, Jessica. He happened to be playing outside the gas station where she worked, she recalls, and she sat down to listen to him. Five months later, the pair were married and moved back to OC, settling in Anaheim.

Case was killed while Jessica was in Mexico visiting her sister. She says the two had just gotten off the phone. "He would go to the library every day while I was gone, and we'd talk at the same time," she says, "and when it happened, he was coming home after talking to me."

Though the loss of Case's life has devastated his family, friends and local musicians who knew him, many of them are grateful for the huge amount of music and videos he left behind, immortal mementos of his talent, his personality and his drive as a musician.

"I know some people who've lost loved ones who told me all they had was a voicemail," Tyler says. "So being able to listen to all the music he made over the years is really nice to have."

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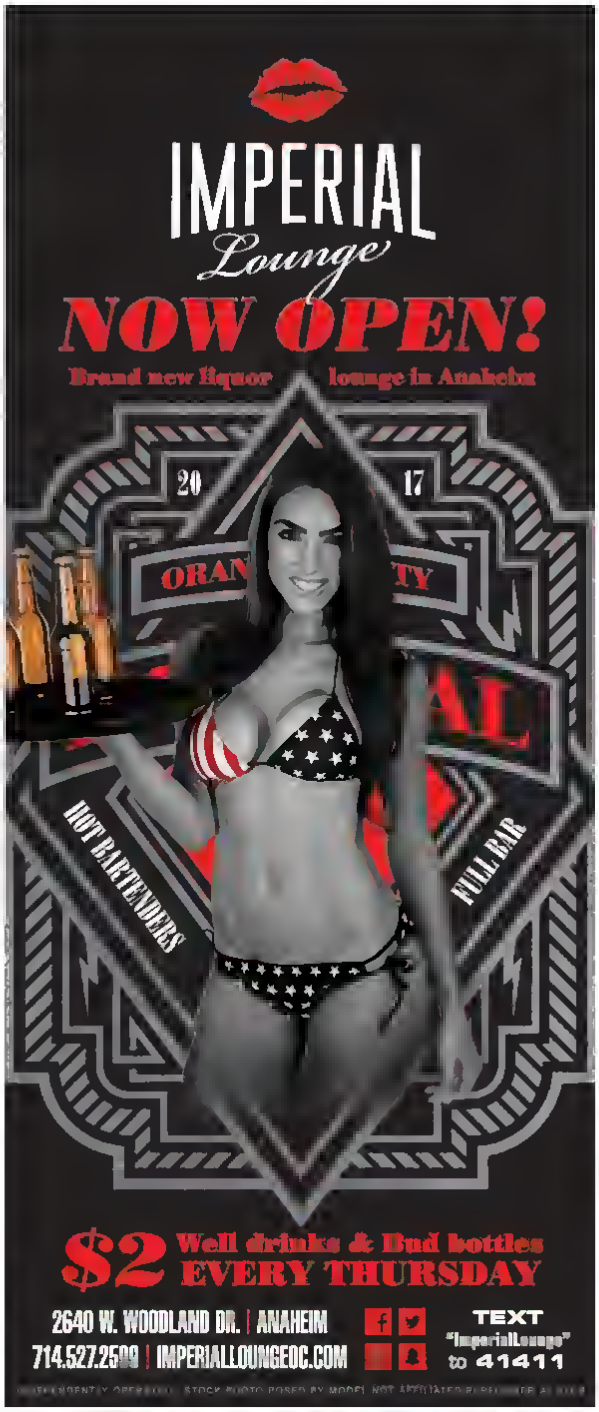

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Loving Lesbians

I am a 22-year-old Italian man, 100 percent straight, sensitive and sporty. I have been reading Savage Love for years in *Internazionale*. I have one question for you: Why do I always fall in love with lesbians? Why do I instantly fall in love with girls who have that something more in their eyes? Something melancholy and perhaps insecure? Girls whom I'd rather protect and embrace than take to bed? The past three girls who fit this description all turned out to be lesbians. The last girl with whom this happened told me it was my "Red Cross" mind-set that made me fall in love with girls who are insecure/sad/melancholy, so I have a sort of selection bias that excludes most straight girls I meet. I do not believe this because the world is full of straight girls who need saving. So why then, Dan? WHY? I have a girlfriend. I truly love her. Since September we have been living in two different cities because she went away to study. I am afraid that one day she is going to tell me she's gay, too. She always talks with me about a new super-cute female friend. Is she a lesbian? I have recently met another girl, super-empathetic. She is gay, and I knew it after an all-night conversation in my car listening to Cigarettes After Sex. Why do I always fall in love with gay girls? Can I love two people at the same time? This is the fourth time that this has happened. Is my girlfriend gay? Why do I find lesbians so attractive? I'm freaking.

Increasingly Tormented About Lesbian Yearnings

There's a lot going on in your letter, ITALY, so I'm going to take your questions one at a time.

1. Maybe you always fall in love with lesbians, or maybe this was a series of coincidences—by pure chance, you fell for more than one women who turned out to be a lesbian—and hey, since you're probably going to love a few more women over the course of your life, ITALY, that "always" seems a bit premature. It's also possible you find women with a certain degree of masculine energy and/or swagger attractive, and women with that swagger are somewhat likelier to be lesbians, slightly upping your chances of falling in love with four girls-who-turned-out-to-be-lesbians in a row.

Personally, ITALY, I'm attracted to guys with a certain degree of feminine swagger, and needless to say, those guys are likelier to be gay. But while almost all effeminate guys are gay—so stigmatized is femininity in males (even in the gay community)—masculine swagger in women is less stigmatized and therefore somewhat less likely to correlate as strongly with lesbianism. Women with masculine swagger and men with feminine swagger are also likely to be self-conscious about their gender-nonconforming traits, particularly when they're young and/or not yet out, and that can read as melancholy and/or insecurity.

2. Women—straight or bi or lesbian—don't need "saving." They need respect, they need to be taken seriously, they need bodily autonomy, and they need loving partners and political allies.

3. Your girlfriend may be a lesbian—anyone could in these highly fluid days, even me. But if your girlfriend isn't straight, ITALY, she's likelier to be bisexual, seeing as there are roughly three times as many bi women as there are lesbian women. And if she seems queer now than when you met, that could be because you landed a straight girl who had been suppressing her masculine swagger—which many men don't find attractive—and she's consciously or subconsciously come to the realization that she doesn't have to play the girly girl around you to hold your attention. Quite the opposite, in fact.

4. It's entirely possible to love more than one person at a time. Just as we are capable of loving more than one parent, child, sibling, friend and television show at a time (you know I love you both equally, *Lady Dynamite* and *The Crown*), we can love more than one romantic partner at a time. But we're told that romantic love is a zero-sum game so often—if someone wins, someone else loses—it has become a self-fulfilling/relationship-destroying prophecy. It's a myth that harms not just people who might want to be with two people, but partnered monogamous people as well. A person who is convinced he can feel romantic love for only one person at a time will doubt his love for a long-term partner if he develops a crush on someone new. He'll say to himself, "I couldn't possibly feel this way about this barista if I was still in love with my partner of 10 years." But those feelings can exist side by side—stable, secure, lasting love for a long-term partner and an intense infatuation (most likely fleeting) for a new person.

5. Cigarettes After Sex were on a boat in the Arabian Sea—they sent the pics to prove it—when I reached them about your dilemma. Drummer Jacob Tomsky said, "About loving more than one person at the same time, a Gabriel García Márquez quote from *Love In the Time of Cholera* comes to mind: 'My heart has more rooms than a whorehouse. Your heart will surprise you with its duplicity.'" Dress capacity Keyboardist Phillip Tubbs wanted to share a Morrissey line with you: "'Cause I want the one I can't have, and it's driving me mad." Lead singer Greg Gonzalez declined to comment.

6. Maybe it's not an accident that you keep falling for lesbians. There are lots of straight men out there who have a thing for dykes. It's entirely possible that you aren't worried your girlfriend is a lesbian, ITALY, but secretly hoping she is. Good luck!

My boyfriend and I have been together for five years. We have had an open relationship from fairly early on, but it's only in the past six months that he's started using various gentlemen's apps for meeting new guys. We don't share apps or have threesomes, our dalliances are solo affairs, and that works for us. I snuck a look at his phone, and I was horrified—the dick pics he's sharing are *terrible*. Poorly lit and with bad angles, they do no justice to his cock. His face pics are great, but I really feel like he's underselling what else he has to offer. How can I help him take better junk shots without revealing that I've been looking at his phone?

Doesn't Instinctively Capture Photographic Instant Classics, Sadly

You could tell your boyfriend you made a joint appointment with a photographer—perhaps as a Hanukkah/Solstice/Christmas/Kwanzaa/Ramadan present—because you thought you should both have Sears-Portrait-Studio-quality-or-better dick pics to share with your prospective hookups, DICPICS, or you could let your boyfriend's hookups be pleasantly surprised when your boyfriend drops his drawers.

Are you really whining about having a president you don't like in office? Is that so terrible that you have to get little digs in every week? That's the problem with you liberals—you're a bunch of wimps. Man up, dude.

Make America Strong Again

Gee, I don't recall any whining from you right-wing he-man back when a black guy who didn't collude with a hostile foreign power and wasn't poisoning our air and water and didn't undermine our Democratic norms and wasn't surrounded by a cadre of deeply corrupt sycophants was president—you guys were so stoic during the Obama years, so he-manly. You avoid up, you didn't whine or moan, you didn't spread wild conspiracy theories or march on Washington waving signs that proved you were every bit as misinformed as you are illiterate. (Wake up, dude.)

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Toke of the Week

» ROBERT FLORES

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ROBERT FLORES

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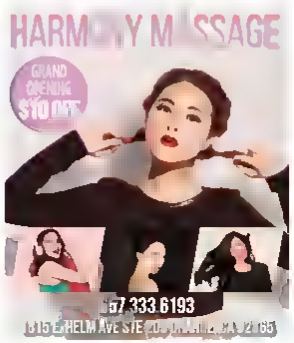
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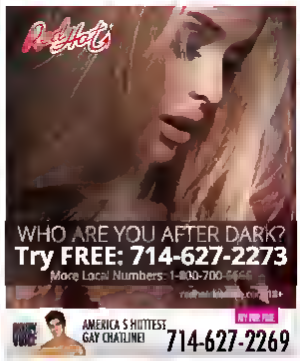
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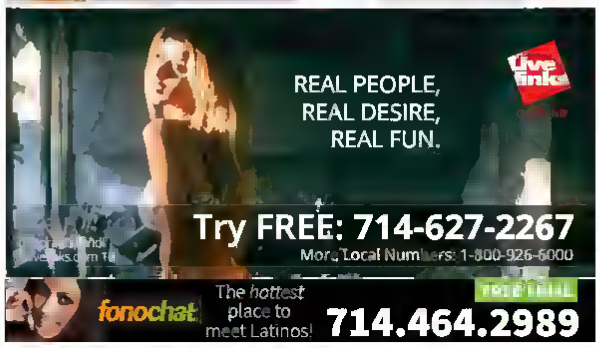
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Becoming the Sugar Plum Fairy

Spending the night with the ghost of Tchaikovsky at Segerstrom Hall

BY MARY CARREON

DOUG GIFFORD

A colleague recently told me about taking his son to see ***The Nutcracker*** The dancers were on pointe, the symphony was in tune, and everything was peachy ... until it wasn't. During the middle of the play, a horse was brought onstage to trot around, adding an old-timey flair to the performance, but as it sauntered from one end of the stage to the other, it slipped and fell. Gasps sounded from the crowd. The lights instantly turned off, the music came to a screeching halt, and the curtain came flying down. The audience—mostly families—sat in their chairs for a solid 10 minutes before the performance resumed.

I was a little scared to go to *The Nutcracker* after hearing that story But I'd never seen the ballet before, and thanks to a classical-music class I took in college, I think **Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky** is a rock star My 65-year-old teacher was just as enthusiastic about classical music as I am about rock & roll. She sang opera and loved the piano, and when she played **Chopin** for the class, she gracefully stacked her hands over her heart, letting her eyes glaze over until the piece finished. She had a thing for **Gustavo Dudamel**, the conductor of the **LA Philharmonic**, the way I had a thing for **Chris Cornell** (RIP!)

On Dec 14, the **Segerstrom Center for the Arts** was decked out with holiday lights and decorations. It appeared as if a disco ball exploded into a million pieces, all of which tastefully landed on branches and streetlights, making them twinkle the way they might under layers of snow Ballerinas in toe shoes danced gracefully in place near the entrance "You have six minutes to make it to your seat," a staff member yelled to the attendees still outside **Segerstrom Hall**. "If you're not in your seat in six minutes, you'll be stuck out here until intermission."

As soon as I took my seat for the **American Ballet Theatre** production, the lights went dark, and a spotlight shone on **David LaMarche**, the conductor of the **Pacific Symphony** LaMarche raised his hands in the air, which provoked a wave of sound from the audience The musicians in the orchestra pit also raised their instruments in the air. From my seat, all I could see were the tips of violin and cello bows, as well as the tops of a few woodwinds bouncing with fervor It was silly and awesome, and made me wish I had stuck with playing the clarinet.

The Pacific Symphony opened the night with "Overture," which quickly led to the start of act one The set was a kitchen, with sausages hanging from the ceiling. Eventually, a bunch of rats begin raiding the food. They dance around the kitchen eating food and rummaging around, then end up fighting, hitting one another with the sausages and essentially running off the stage like crazies If only in real life we could run offstage when we feel the scene should end.

The first half of the play was focused mostly on the children. The performance was a blend of burgeoning ballet dancers and professionals. The best part of the first act was when **Clara** and the **Nutcracker** are walking around outside and it starts to snow, signaling a group of at least 20 ballerinas who resemble fairy snow princesses to enter the stage The little girl sitting in front of me gasped loud enough to pierce through the music She reached for her sister, who was in the seat next to her, and looked at her, her face in a perfect "O." The sister responded with equal excitement, slamming both hands to her cheeks and squishing her smile The first sister laughed in response, prompting their mother to shush them. With their hair coiled into buns, the little girls resembled aspiring ballerinas, they were on the edges of their seats the entire performance.

Behind me and to the left was a woman in her fifties who was conversing with the person next to her about an article she read in the newspaper regarding net neutrality In any other setting, she probably wouldn't have seemed loud, but I could hear pretty much every word she said. I could also tell she was a longtime smoker. The woman sitting directly in front of her began fidgeting in her seat, and less than two minutes later, she turned around and told the babbling woman to shut up, but the woman didn't stop talking Who knew the ballet could get so rowdy?

Intermission came and went in a flash. (Maybe it's because I downed a glass and a half of wine?) When I got back to my seat, one of the ushers was speaking with the lady who had been talking. I could tell the exchange was a sassy one because they both rolled their eyes when the lights signaled the show was about to resume.

The second half of the performance was my favorite; it's also essentially a string of Tchaikovsky's greatest hits. The dances were far more intricate, difficult and enthralling. **Hee Seo** was the evening's principal ballerina, and the way she moved was, as the cliché goes, poetry in motion. She exuded a celestial elegance that made you feel her passion.

Her performance made me wish I stuck with ballet. As she was thrown in the air, I had a flashback to when I was barely 5 years old. I demanded to be put in ballet because all my friends were doing it. I made it to four classes (if that) before I was over it. I wrapped my pinky in tape and told my mom I was seriously injured and couldn't go on with ballet anymore. My mom rolled her eyes at me and made me finish the session and go through with the recital.

"I want to be a **Sugar Plum Fairy** when I grow up!" one of the little ballerinas in front of me said to her mother.

"You can be anything you want, including the Sugar Plum Fairy, if you work hard and stay in school."

The little girl turned to her sister with furrowed eyebrows "I hate school."

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